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## **BENNETT ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO STORAGE OF NUCLEAR WASTE IN UTAH**

*Requests 120-day extension of comment period and additional hearings for further analysis and public input*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) today announced his opposition to the proposed storage of nuclear waste in Utah's West Desert and requested a 120-day extension of the public comment period on licensing of the storage facility.

Following is a transcript of remarks delivered today in the Senate by Senator Bennett announcing his opposition, and a copy of his letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Bennett serves as a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee which has jurisdiction over the NRC:

"I rise to address an issue of great concern to the people of my state and, I believe, the country as a whole. Private Fuel Storage is in the process of seeking a license to store nuclear waste on the Goshute Indian Reservation in the state of Utah. Their application seeks a 20 year license with the option of extending it for an additional 20 years. This is being described as an interim storage place for nuclear waste.

"I have been silent on this issue up until now, but I have decided to take the floor and announce my opposition to this storage for two reasons. One is something that requires further study and might be dealt with, but the second and more powerful reason for my opposition is a permanent policy issue.

"The first reason for my opposition is the location of this particular site with respect to the Utah Test and Training Range. One of the things most Americans don't realize is that we require the Air Force training over land. Much of the training that takes place with the armed forces takes place over water. But it is not the right kind of training experience for pilots to always have to fly over water.

"The Utah Test and Training Range has a long history of service to our nation's military. It was there that the pilots trained for the flights over Tokyo in the Second World War, indeed it was there that the crew of the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was trained. The proposal for the storage site at the Goshute

Indian Reservation is in a location that will affect the flight pattern of Air Force Pilots flying over the Utah Test and Training Range. I have flown that pattern myself in a helicopter provided by the military and I have seen firsthand just how close it is to the proposed nuclear waste repository.

"Now, there are people at the Pentagon who have said that the flight path will not be effected and everything is fine. I have learned during the debate over the Base Realignment and Closure activity that sometimes what is said out of the Pentagon is more politically correct than it is substantively correct. I have talked to the pilots at Hill Air Force Base who fly that pattern and they have told me – free of any handlers from the Pentagon – that they are very nervous about having a nuclear waste repository below military airspace that will require them to maneuver in a way that might cause danger, and could certainly erode the level of the training that they can obtain at the Utah Test and Training Range. I do not think we should move ahead with certifying this particular location until there has been a complete and thorough study of the impact of this proposal on the Utah Test and Training Range and upon the Air Force's ability to train its pilots.

"That is the first reason I rise to oppose this but it is a reason that is subject to study, analysis and examination and may not be a permanent reason. The second reason I rise to oppose is more important, in my view, than the first one. I want to deal with that at greater length.

"Let us look at the history of nuclear waste storage in the United States. The United States decided 18 years before a deadline in 1998 that the Department of Energy would, in 1998, take responsibility for the storage of nuclear waste. That means that through a number of administrations, Republican and Democrat, the Department of Energy has had 18 years to get ready to deal with this problem. Current estimates are that the Department of Energy is between 12 and 15 years away from having a permanent solution to this problem. I do not think that is an admirable record -- to have had 18 years notice, miss the deadline and still be as much as 15 years away from it.

"Up to \$8 billion, maybe even as much as \$9 billion has been spent on preparing a determined location as a permanent storage site for America's nuclear waste. We are no closer politically to being ready for that. We are closer in terms of the site. I'm referring, of course, to the proposed waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, near the Nevada test site. Many times people forget that. The Nevada test site is where we tested the bombs that were dropped elsewhere and the bombs that went into our nuclear stockpile. So the ground at the Nevada test site has already been subjected to nuclear exposure. The seismic studies have been done. Yucca Mountain has been found to be the most logical place to put this material on a long-term basis. And twice while I have been in the Congress, we have voted to move ahead on that, and twice the president has vetoed the bills.

"Now, against that background comes this proposal to build an interim storage site in the state of Utah, on the reservation of the Goshute Indians adjacent to the Utah Test and Training range. This is my reason for opposing that so-called interim site. I do not believe that it will be interim. I believe that if we start shipping nuclear material to the Goshute reservation in Utah, that gives the administration and other politicians the opportunity to continue to delay moving ahead on Yucca Mountain.

"Now, how much federal money has been spent preparing the Goshute Indian Reservation to receive this? Virtually none. That compared to the \$8-9 billion that have been spent on Yucca Mountain.

"There will be one delay after another if this thing starts in Utah and people will say we don't need to move ahead on Yucca Mountain; we have a place we can put it in the interim. The interim will turn into a century, or two centuries, while the government continues to dither on the issue of Yucca Mountain."

"I am in favor of nuclear power. I believe it is safe. I believe it is essential to our overall energy policy. I am in favor of the Energy Department's fulfilling the commitment that was made in 1980 that said by 1998, the Department of Energy will have a permanent storage facility. I believe we have identified that facility through sound science, through the expenditure of federal funds, through every kind of research that can be done and we are ignoring, for whatever political reason, the opportunity to solve this problem at Yucca Mountain while we are talking about an interim solution at the Goshute reservation.

"It is simply not a wise public policy to say that since we cannot solve the permanent problem, we will find a backdoor way for a stopgap interim solution. The stopgap interim solution will become a permanent solution without the planning, without the analysis and without the expenditures that have already gone into the permanent solution that's already available to us.

"Therefore, for these two reasons, I announce my opposition to the repository on the Goshute reservation in Utah. I am sending a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission asking that they extend the time for another 120 days for public comment on their proposal to proceed with this license. I think the first reason that I've cited alone justifies that extension because there has not been sufficient analysis of the impact of this proposed facility on the Utah Test and Training Range. I hope in that 120-day period we could get that kind of analysis. The second reason, the more serious reason, will still remain. I hope in that 120-day period we can begin to approach that as well.

**A copy of [Bennett's letter to the NRC](#) follows.**

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